

January 27, 1957

Dr. Aaron Novick  
Chicago 37, N.Y.

Dear Aaron:

You must be wondering if the U/W has forgotten all about you. I have been trying to keep in close touch with the proceedings in zoology, but until recently thought it best not to take any direct part. Jim just told me he had not communicated with you at all since your visit— I will try to fill in what has been happening.

There has evidently been a great deal of confusion on two points: 1) just what a biophysicist is, and where he does belong— a lot of time has been needlessly wasted in trying to ~~decide~~ just what role physics as well as zoology ought to play. I think myself some sort of joint arrangement would be the most valuable to the university, but an unofficial opinion on your part, viz. through me, might be helpful to clear the air. Are you interested in such an association, positively or negatively, if so to what extent (i.e., as a condition of your interest or as a mild inducement +/-) or indifferent? You can rely on me to translate your reactions in such a form that they will not be embarrassing to anyone: if they ~~th~~ had thought to ask you in the first place a lot of time might have been saved. 2) [and this shocked me!] several people seem to have thought that my 'non-intervention' was some form of diffidence. As soon as this came to my attention, I made short shrift of that; I just had not wanted to upset any applecarts by undue interest (i.e., pressure.) from another department. Anyhow, these matters should be straightened out fairly early and I personally hope they can bring you a formal offer in a few weeks more at most. I am disgusted myself at the whole business, when everything was all settled last year, but that's the way departments go. They were afraid to say too much to you—e.g. no one in zoology is in a position to offer you a place in physics-- and they hadn't figured out what to do. Meanwhile, the two departments had thoroughly confused each other as to the proper order of events.

There is another possible complication. As you probably have heard already, I have an offer from Stanford (vice Ed Tatum), and hard on the heels of that another one from Berkeley (vice Clausen, in Genetics). Esther and I are having a very difficult time deciding just what to do; in some ways, Berkeley has a slight edge but there are some potential hitches. We are taking these possibilities of moving very seriously, although we thought we had settled down here more or less permanently. We have about six weeks to decide. Balanced against these are more or less concrete probabilities of a department-let of Institutchen in medical genetics, with a proper new lab etc. I know your feelings about medical schools; my own background is more congenial to medicine, and this particular program is a real challenge. Now, whether or not you can be ~~settled~~ settled here is one very relevant consideration to us, and I imagine that one

way or another you have a reciprocal interest. I will do what I can to consult with you before any definite decisions are made, and would ask the same of you.

We will probably see you about February 15 in Chicago & we won't have fixed anything before then. I hope I've made myself clear a) we haven't decided yet, and b) if we do go it will be July '58. (We're off for London in March, and Australia June--September): this year's shot already!) The rumors have come back already, and some of them are fantastic.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg  
*Joshua*